



Finding Your "I AM" Through Indigenous Visual Art

Language Arts, Visual Arts, SEL

Lesson Plans

Grades K - 3

**This lesson was curated and designed by a non-Indigenous teacher and reviewed by Indigenous educators.*

Finding Your “I AM” Through Indigenous Art

In 1875, English poet William Ernest Henley wrote *Invictus*, a poem that has long served as inspiration for those facing adversity or challenges in their lives. The word *Invictus* means “unconquered”.

I AM is the motto for the Invictus Games and is inspired by the last two lines of *Invictus*: “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.” “I AM” reflects and defines the Invictus Games’ core purpose: to provide a platform for personal achievement, to compete not just against each other, but against oneself.

The Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 (IG2025) will bring together over 500 wounded, injured, and sick military service members and veterans from around the world on a courageous journey of recovery through the healing power of sport. Learn how their experiences at the Games have transformed their lives and helped them in their quest to be “unconquerable.”

Objective

Students will be able to study the visual art of the Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 and find meaning in the images. Students will create their own art incorporating a connection to nature and Coast Salish design elements.

Target Audience

Students in grades K-3. This lesson would be suited for Visual Arts, Language Arts, and it can also be used as an activity on Social & Emotional Learning focusing on identity or resilience.

Teacher Note

These lessons can be adapted to suit your subject, your grade level and your personal style of teaching.

When taking photos of your student’s work, make sure there are no student identifiers in the picture.

IG2025 would like you to be part of the Invictus community and post your student’s work on Instagram (@invictusgames25) with the hashtag

#ShareYourIAM

This activity is on the last page of this document.

THE INVICTUS GAMES STUDENT INFORMATION

This 7th edition of the Games will be held on the traditional territories of the Lil'wat7úl ([Lil'wat](#)), x^wməθk^wəy'əm ([Musqueam](#)), Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)) and səliiwətaʔ ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Nations. The Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 are working closely with the Nations to ensure they respond to Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and to ensure Indigenous protocols are respected in all aspects of the Games.

Overview

The Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 is a special event to celebrate the bravery and strength of soldiers and veterans who got hurt or sick while helping their countries. From February 8 to 16, 2025, more than 500 amazing people from up to 25 countries will come to Vancouver and Whistler for the first Winter Invictus Games. They will play in 11 different sports to help them heal and grow stronger, with their families and friends cheering for them.

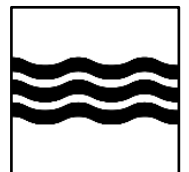
The word "Invictus" means "unbeaten," showing how these brave people never give up, no matter how tough things get.

Inspiration Through Poetry

A long time ago, in 1875, a man from England named William Ernest Henley wrote a famous poem called *Invictus*. The word *Invictus* means "unbeaten." This poem has helped many people feel strong when life gets hard.

The Invictus Games' motto is "I AM." This comes from the last lines of the poem, which say, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." "I AM" means that the Invictus Games are about doing your best. It's not just about winning but about trying hard and becoming stronger.

The Invictus Games give soldiers and veterans who have been hurt or sick a chance to get better and feel strong again by playing sports. These games help them feel "unbeatable" and full of courage.



Invictus Games and Indigenous Peoples

Watch the video "[Ceremonies – Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAReCi0a7BQ)" to see what the games are all about (www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAReCi0a7BQ)

Watch the video, "[What We Do](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OJOV-eoOS0)" to see what effects the games have (www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OJOV-eoOS0)

1. Conduct a class or small group discussion

- a. What did they see in the above videos?
- b. What do they think is happening what is being celebrated?
- c. Ask them to describe the people in the videos? What are they saying and how do they feel about themselves?



Watch [Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025: Four Host First Nations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYRFh7Nj3gs)

(www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYRFh7Nj3gs)

Explain to the class that there are 4 host nations and the video has a speaker from each of the 4 nations welcoming people to the Invictus Games.

"The very first thing I saw, was that identical journey. Where we are, where we have been and we struggle with trauma being who we are. It is an identical journey Invictus and First Nations. I'm Chief Dean Nelson and I want to welcome you to the homelands of the Lil'wat7úl (Lil'wat) Nation."

"Hello. I'm Chief Wayne Sparrow, elected chief of the x^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam) First Nation. I want to welcome you to our ancestral lands. We admire your courage and your participation walking together with you on this journey in life. Welcome on behalf of our community."

"It's been an awakening not only to be included but feeling a part of every step of the way. The power of Invictus to be unconquered is something that our Indigenous Peoples connect with wholeheartedly. My message to the competitors through our culture and our traditions. Our teachings are to hold each other up, to empower each other and we are only stronger together, united. I am Counselor Wilson Williams and I want to welcome you to the traditional territory of the S^kwx^wú7mesh (Squamish) Nation."

"I am Chief Jen Thomas of səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nation. I'd like to welcome all the competitors and visitors who will come for the Invictus games to our beautiful land. We at səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nation believe in the power of sport. We admire your courage and determination to overcome any challenge. I want to take this time now to welcome the competitors to the shared territory of the x^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), S^kwx^wú7mesh (Squamish), səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) and Lil'wat7úl (Lil'wat) Nations. Hand in hand, we walk together on the journey of recovery."

Invictus Games and Indigenous Peoples (Pg 2)

1. Watch the video a 2nd time and ask the class to describe the natural environment each Chief or spokesperson chose to film their speech. Record specific things they see in the background.

2. Ask students why they think the speakers chose those natural environments? (Depending on their prior knowledge, you may have to explain that Indigenous Peoples have a very strong and respectful relationship with nature).

3. Chief Wayne Sparrow and Chief Jen Thomas both spoke of admiring the courage of the competitors of the Invictus Games. Ask students why they think it took courage for the competitors to be part of the Invictus Games?



Coast Salish Art

Ovals and circles stand for things that happen over and over, like the sun rising and setting, the moon changing shape, and the seasons coming and going. They also show togetherness and being in the middle of something. These shapes remind us that what we do today affects us, the people around us, and kids in the future.

Crescents and long crescents show different stages, like the phases of the moon or different times in life. Instead of counting days, weeks, or months, the Coast Salish People watched how the seasons changed to know when to do important things. These changes helped them live their daily lives.

The trigon is a special symbol with four points—three on the outside and one in the middle. The middle point is very important because the number four is special in Coast Salish teachings. **It stands for the four main directions (north, south, east, and west) and the four parts of a person: the body, the mind, the heart, and the spirit.**

April Strickland, Mi'kmaq [Introduction to Contemporary Coast Salish Art](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkLNGXvpFu8) (2:47 - 4:38)



Invictus Games Visual Identity

"We are very proud of the work we did together, and believe this artwork is a strong representation and reflection of our Nations' culture, lands, and waters,"



Olivia George
(Tseil-Waututh Nation)



Mack Paul
(Musqueam Nation)



Ray Natraoro
(Squamish Nation)



Levi Nelson
(Lil'wat Nation)

"We were able to share our ideas, experiences, and cultural references, to come together for the first time to convey meaning from our Nations."

From <https://invictusgames2025.ca/latest-updates/invictus-games-vancouver-whistler-2025-unveils-new-visual-identity-designed-by-four-leading-first-nations-artists/>



Invictus Games Art & Meanings For Students

Instructions: For each of the specific shapes in this Indigenous piece of art, label what you think each shape represents. Use each word only once.

Sun

Ocean

Eagle

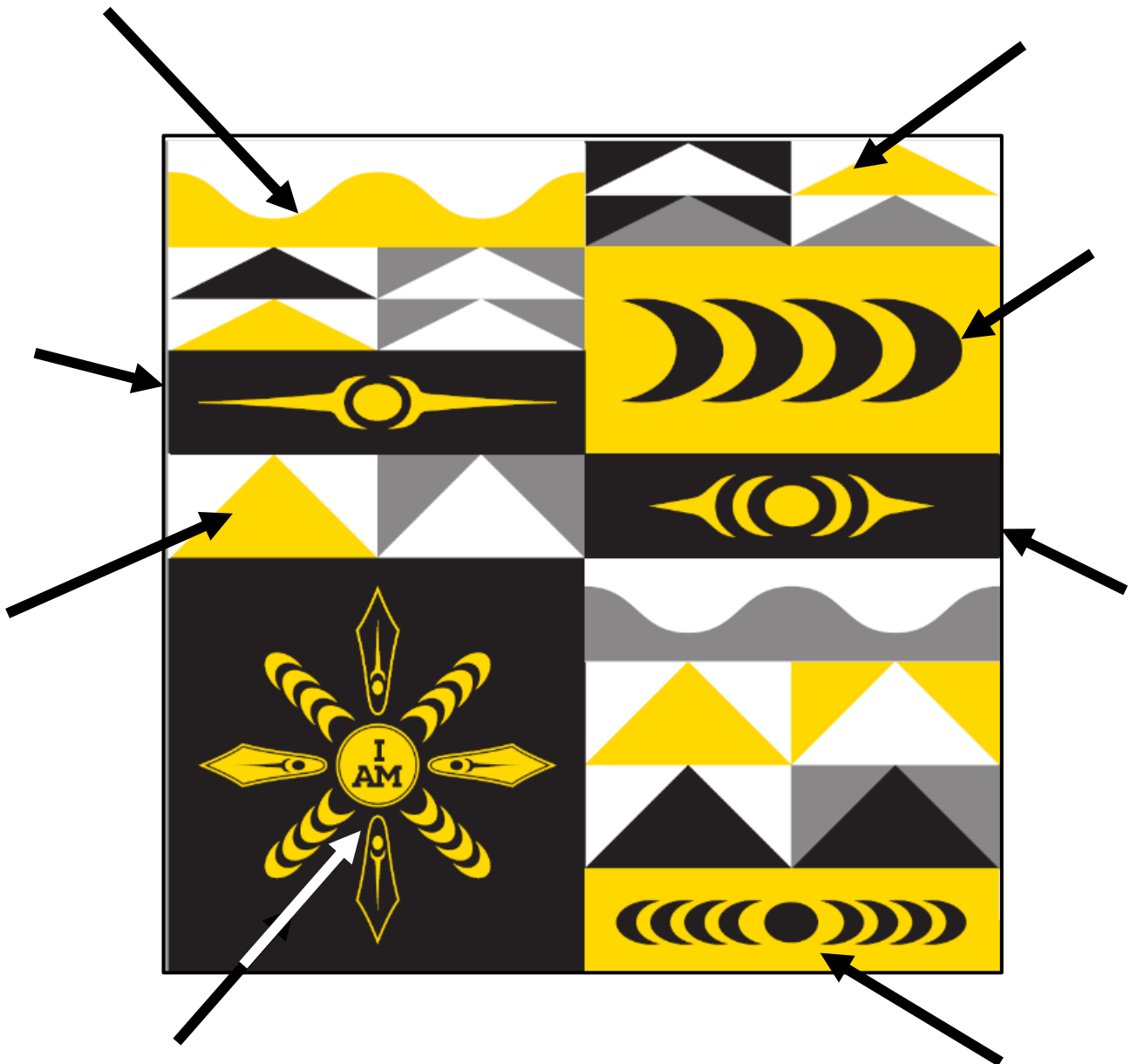
Mountains

River

Trees

Lake

Waterfall



Lessons From the Land

The connection between Coast Salish people and the land and water of the Pacific Northwest is at the center of cultural beliefs and practices. For the Coast Salish peoples, the earth is the ultimate source of nourishment and knowledge. Earth provides gifts of food, shelter, clothing and medicine.

<https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/assets/2009-11-17-Coast-Salish-Fast-Facts.pdf>

We can learn from Indigenous People about how to have a special relationship with nature. We can learn a lot about ourselves by looking and studying nature.

Instructions

You can print and cut out the photos and words for students to work with in small groups, or you can project the image onto a screen and do this as a class activity.

1. Look at each picture and place them below the matching titles on the next page. Some photos can go under more than one category.

2. Look at each of the words in the word bank. Discuss each word as a group and decide which words go with which photo.

If things in nature could talk, think of what they would tell you about their own positive personality traits. For example,

- A mountain might tell you that it is strong.
- A tree might tell you that it is caring.
- A sunset might say that it is creative, special, grateful, or calm.

Some of the words may go with more than one part of nature. There is no right answer, students can place the word under any photo that fits.



Titles / Categories

Trees

Lakes

Eagles

Waterfalls

The Ocean

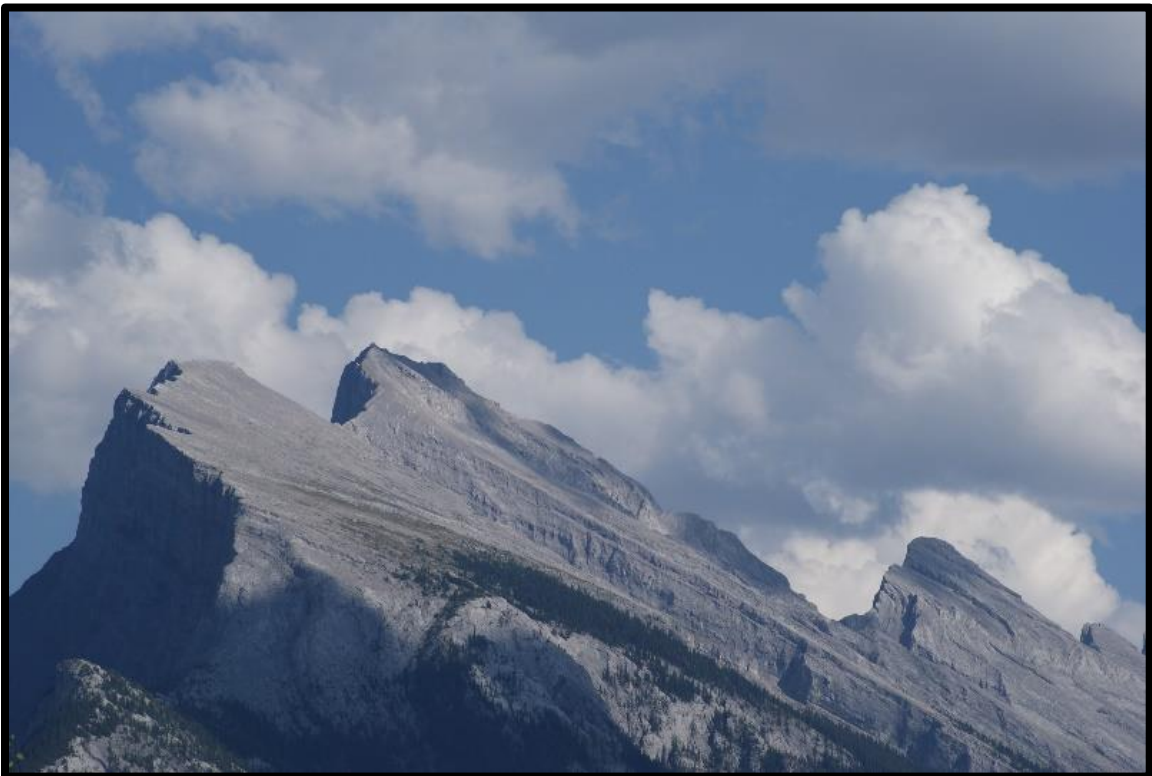
The Sun

Rivers

Mountains

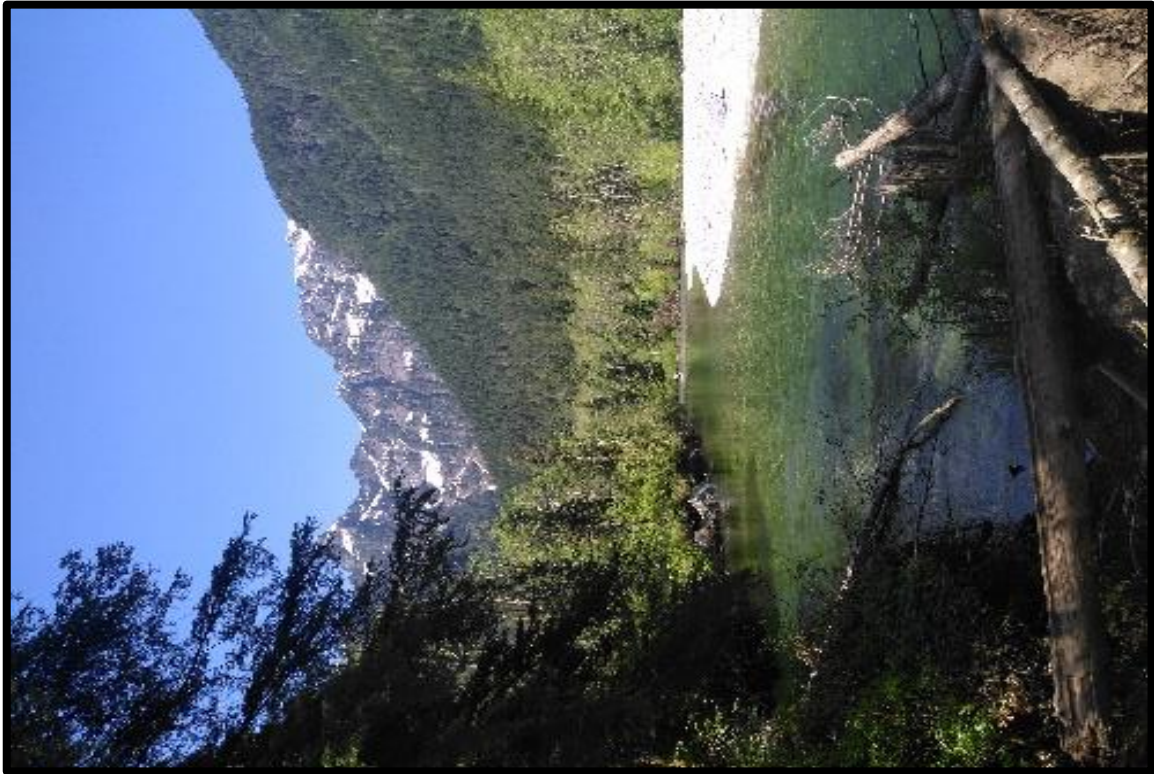
Photos

All photos by cassie.lumsden (Instagram)













Word Bank

Brave

Bright

Calm

Cheerful

Curious

Gentle

Helpful

Kind

Peaceful

Proud

Powerful

Strong

Warm

Wise

Invictus Games Art & Meaning For Students

In each shape on the following page, students should choose one word that represents that particular piece of nature and is also an character trait they possess.

For example – the large triangle could represent a mountain. Inside the triangle the student would write their shared character trait on the line. Students should look back at the previous lesson and choose a word that suits them. It could be the word “strong”.

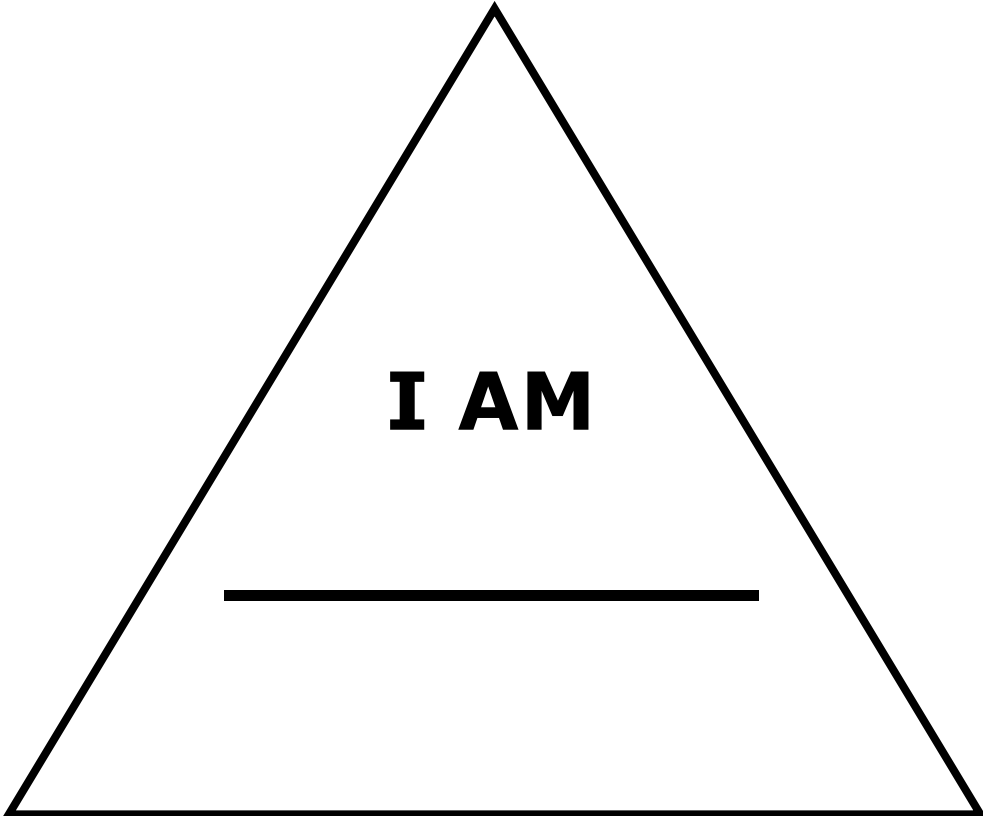
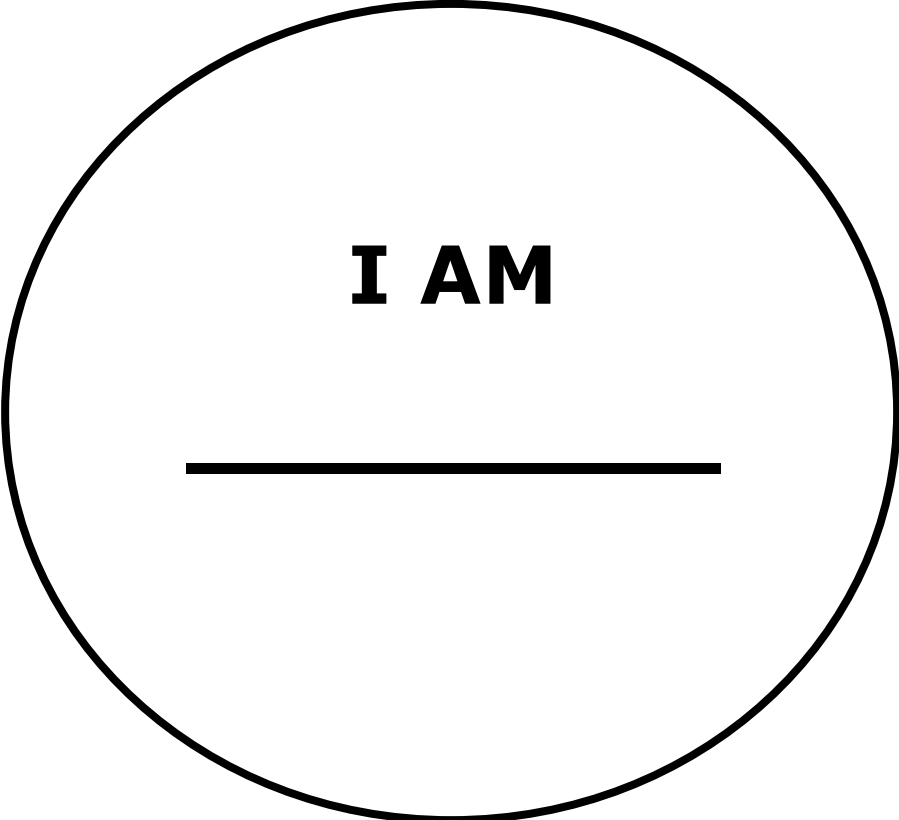


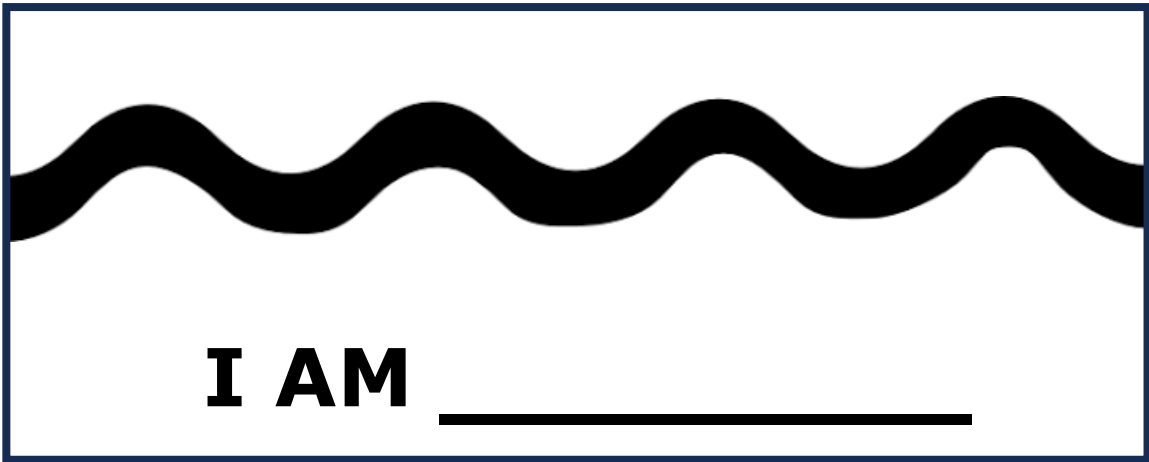
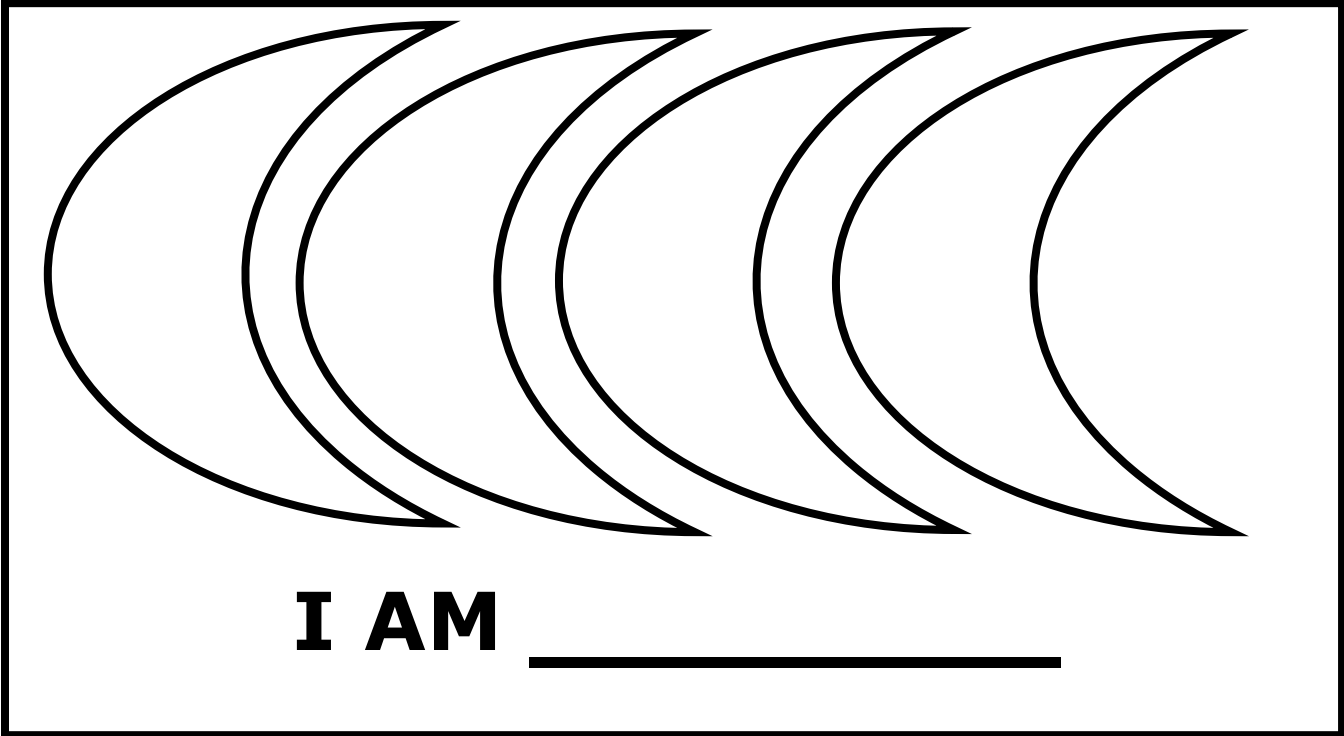
After students have chosen what shape represents what piece of nature and they have printed what their I AM word will be for that shape, they could color each shape, making sure the word is still readable. Students can cut out their shapes (either as boxes or around the shape) and create a picture on a piece of construction paper by gluing their shapes in whatever way they like.

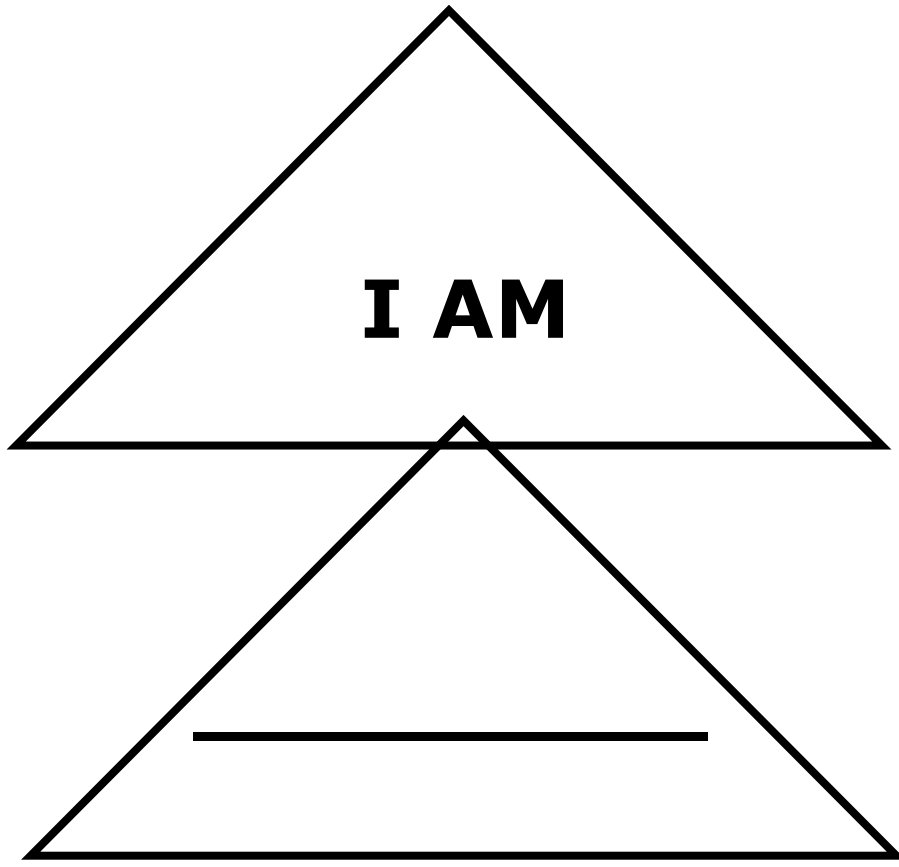
You can go to <https://legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/salishcurriculum/art-project/coast-salish-design-elements-templates/> and print the following templates if you wish or you can draw the shapes freehand.

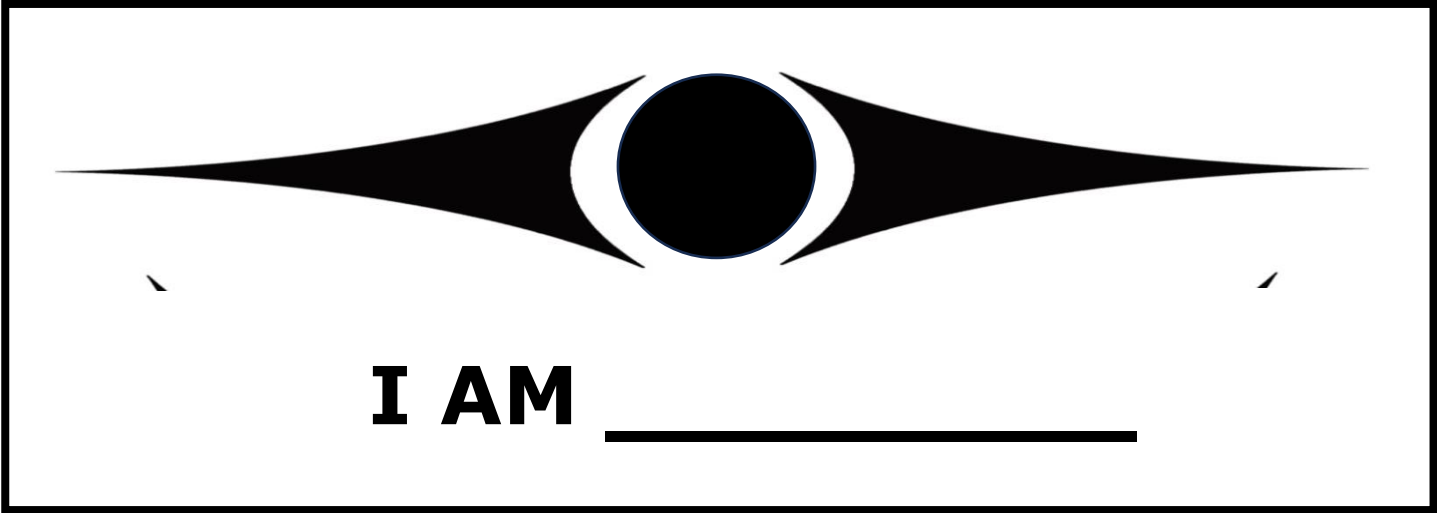
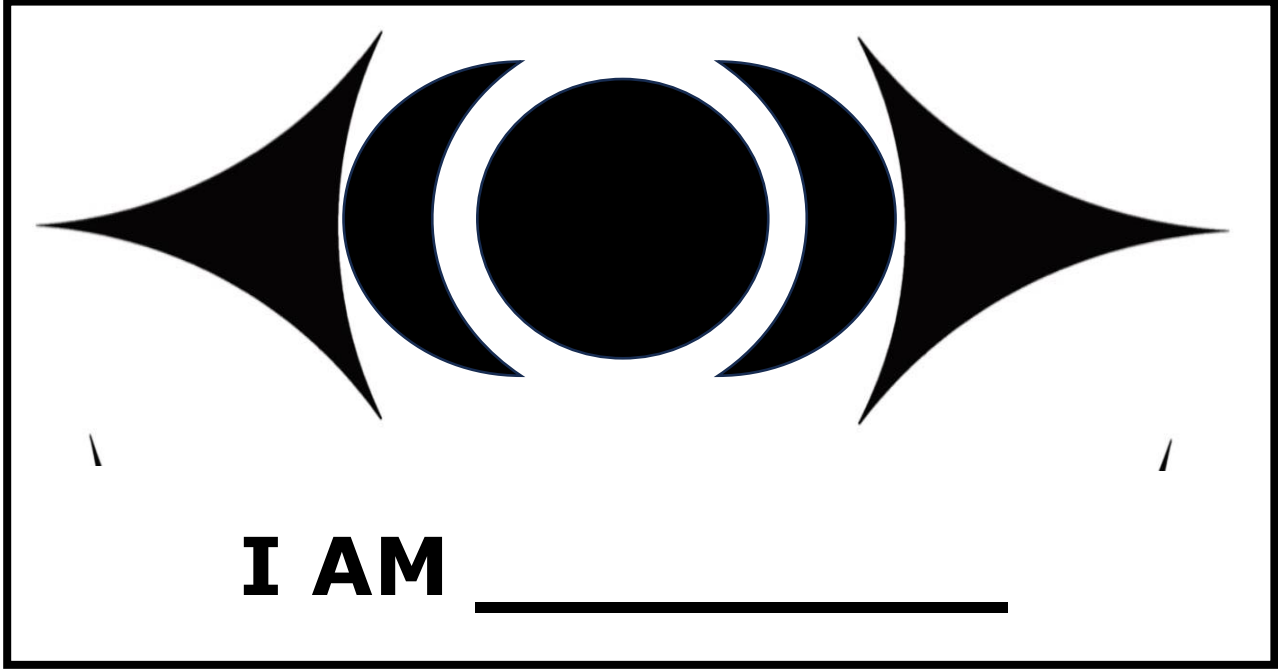
Tell your students to be creative and have fun!

On the last page, use a Sharpie and have students choose their favourite "I AM" statement. Make your I AM word(s) large, so it stands out when you take a photo of their work to post on Instagram.









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INVICTUS
GAMES
VANCOUVER • WHISTLER 2025

